

Create an Emergency Communications Plan for Your Family

A crucial part of any family emergency plan is communications. It's vital that each member knows what to do if the family is separated in a disaster. Emergency situations are stressful and can create confusion. Having a clear communication plan will help keep family members calm.

1.) Pick two places for family members to meet:

- Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency like a fire.
- Outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot return home or are evacuated from your neighborhood.

Designated family meeting places are especially important for families in which adults work and children are in school.

2.) Pick two out-of-town contacts:

- A friend or relative who will be your household's primary contact.
- A friend or relative who will be your household's alternative contact.

Both adults and children should know the primary and alternative contacts' names, addresses, and home and cell phone numbers, or carry the information with them at all times. In addition, include the contact numbers on your pet's identification tags or use a national pet locator service that someone could call to report finding your pet.

Separation is particularly likely during the day when adults are at work and children are in school. If household members are separated from one another in a disaster, they should call the primary contact. If the primary contact cannot be reached, they should call the alternative contact. Remember, after a disaster, it is often easier to complete a long-distance connection than a local call.

Make sure adults and children know how to tell the contact where they are, how to reach them, and what happened, or to leave this essential information in a brief voice mail.

3.) Post emergency numbers (fire, police, ambulance) by telephones.

You may not have time in an emergency to look up critical numbers.